

Pop-up show — 'Where's the art?'

By Charles Desmarais

The New York gallery **Venus Over Manhattan** has taken over the vestry of a de-consecrated church for a pop-up exhibition that will run through March 8. It's a smallish show — just 11 works. Most of those are furniture, so the casual visitor might be forgiven for asking, "Where's the art?" It's a question that hung in the air over San Francisco for much of last weekend, as design took its place alongside painting, prints and sculpture in several spaces around town, once the art fairs of Fog Week settled over the city.

Yet the precise placement of four pieces by the French architect and designer Charlotte Perriand, in careful relation to a pair of nearly black canvases by the Italian painter Alberto Burri, mounted by a couple of joyful table-scaled sculptures by Americans Ken Price and Alexander Calder, might count as an artistic act in itself.

The show casually ignores the striking imbalance of the room's prettily painted walls and the modernist rigor of Perriand's chunky wooden forms. Likewise, the Renaissance Revival pendant lights coexist with a bare-bulbed Perriand wall lamp, boldly cantilevered more than 6 feet into the space. That kind of purposeful, postmodern mash-up of styles and forms tells its own story. The setting itself demands that we consider history, fashion and function as a part of our consideration of any given object.

Venus over St. Joseph's: 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Mondays-Fridays. Through March 8. Free. Venus Over Manhattan, St. Joseph's Arts Society, 1401 Howard St., S.F. 212-980-0700. www.venusovermanhattan.com

Carpenters Workshop Gallery: 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Mondays-Fridays. Ongoing. Free. Carpenters Workshop Gallery, St. Joseph's Arts Society, 1401 Howard St., S.F. 415-626-1089. www.carpentersworkshopgallery.com

K.r.m. Mooney: "Näcre": 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Tuesdays-Fridays; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays. Through Feb. 16. Altman Siegel, 1150 25th St., S.F. 415-576-9300. www.altmansiegel.com

Diana Al-Hadid: "Temperamental Nature": 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Mondays-Fridays; 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays. Through Feb. 16. Free. Berggruen Gallery, 10 Hawthorne St., S.F. 415-781-4629. www.berggruen.com

The Venus over Manhattan pop-up is nested in the remarkable **St. Joseph's Arts Society** building, which last week was, in turn, embedded in the art fair that proudly upholds a tradition of striking juxtaposition. The fair calls itself Fog Design + Art, and I take that "plus" sign seriously. It skirts the static, coequal implication of the conjunction "and," in favor of a symbol that is active and additive.

St. Joseph's, to which most of us were introduced by an extensive Tony Bravo article in *The Chronicle* last month, takes that philosophy of, let's call it, "constructive disso-



Matt Harrington / Carpenters Workshop Gallery

Lamps by the Spanish designer Nacho Carbonell are featured at Carpenters Workshop Gallery.

nance" to extraordinary lengths. The Society is a 1913 former Catholic church, recently reopened as a vast Wunderkammer — a cabinet, grown into a cathedral, of curiosities.

There, amid the bar and the bookstore and the papier-mâché bears standing guard, **Carpenters Workshop Gallery** occupies a substantial mezzanine with a rotating selection of objects that can only be called works of art with a purpose. A grove of tree-like forms with hammered concrete root balls and rebar trunks and branches, by the Spanish designer Nacho Carbonell, reveals itself to be a collection of floor and table lamps once the switches are thrown.

Jewelry people: The Lenox, Mass., art jewelry dealer **Siena Patti** also brought a pop-up to town for the Fog art fair week. "Bling" lasted only four days, and its production values were far more modest than Venus Over Manhattan's. Patti sponsored a lively panel dis-

cussion that balanced two jewelry specialists, Susan Cummins and Kellie Riggs, with the contemporary art curator Claudia Schmuckli and art journalist Sarah Thornton, who moderated. Counterintuitively, it was the "jewelry people" on the panel and in the audience who argued that the medium has not been accepted by the art world, and the art experts who claimed that art is art regardless of medium. I felt I was getting under the wire before the jewelers get the word, buying a terrific work of conceptual art for little more than \$200.

The artist K.r.m. Mooney studied jewelry making, we are told, and the smallest of the odd objects on view in the one-person exhibition "Näcre," on view at **Altman Siegel** through Feb. 16, can recall body adornments. As any jeweler will tell you, however, works in that medium reveal their meaning only when they are worn — their relationship to the body is part of the art. Mooney's ungenerous scattering of carefully wrought metal-

lic things is not merely enigmatic, or even lifeless, but spiritless.

Layering: **Berggruen Gallery's** invigorating exhibition of free-standing sculptures, wall works and drawings by Diana Al-Hadid looks complete unto itself, encompassing a dozen objects of domestic scale or somewhat larger. That's appropriate to the gallery space and to the work's prospective market.

It is useful to know, however, about the much larger sculptural installations she has produced, for example, at San Jose Museum of Art in 2017, or her major public work, the six-structure "Delirious Matter," spread across New York's Madison Square Park last year.

But Al-Hadid works big even when the results don't spread across a museum gallery or a public park. "Temperamental Nature," at Berggruen through Feb. 16, packs tons of formal and intellectual density into sculptures that seem formed from liquid color, and three-dimensional panels that hang like layered paintings on the walls.

I like the paintings best, though they are the hardest to describe whether verbally or in a photograph. They are ingeniously turned in on themselves, with interior colors and forms visible through apertures in the surface, and they describe grand, if indistinct, vistas. Some suggest figures, drawn upon Old Master models, lost in the haze of memory and history.

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